

LESSON

Muckrakers of the Progressive Era

A deeper look into the writings of Jacob Riis and Upton Sinclair

By Diane Domiteaux - 8th grade social studies

Groupings: Day 1 the students are alone and then with a partner who has the same reading. On day 2 the students are in heterogeneous groups of 4. Two have done the deep read on an excerpt of Chapter 15 -The Problem of the Children from the book How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis, and two have done the deep read on an excerpt of Chapter 13 from Upton Sinclair's book The Jungle. I have placed my lower readers with partners who will support them and invite them to participate.

Standards: CCSS Key Ideas and Details - 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources. 2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source. Provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions. Craft and Structure - 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas - 9. Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic. (I am actually having them analyze 2 primary sources on two different topics (both from Progressive Muckrakers) and compare and contrast them. This lesson may not qualify under this standard. Nevada Social Studies Standards - H3 -6-8-11 - Discuss the rise of the Populist and Progressive Movements and explain how they reflected social change. H1. 6-8.3- Assess the impact of technological innovations and urbanization on society's social and economic development.

Objectives: Students will be able to compare the writings of the two Muckrakers to determine similarities and to brainstorm solutions to the problems these writings exposed. The following I can statements will be written on the Objective board for Day 1 - I can read, annotate, and answer questions alone. I can discuss my reading with a partner who has the same reading and share answers to the questions. I can work with my partner to write a short summary of the reading. Day 2 - I can participate in my Jigsaw group to teach the other members about my reading and the Muckraker who wrote it. I can share my answers and ideas as we work together to answer the questions about both readings. I can compare the readings to find similarities in what the authors were trying to accomplish with their writings. I can brainstorm possible solutions to the problems exposed in these writings. I can research to find what Progressive Era laws, regulations and acts were made after the people of that time were made aware of these problems in their society.

Materials: Jacob Riis reading, Upton Sinclair reading, large construction or chart paper, markers, highlighters, and sticky notes.

Background to the lesson: The students will have had 3 days of background instruction on the Progressive Era. This was taught using a power point with numerous embedded videos to show them what was going on during this era. They have also been working on a Progressive Vocabulary Matrix as a bell starter/sponge activity for the first ten minutes of class on the first 3 days. Therefore they will only have some surface knowledge of this topic prior to the readings. The first day of this lesson will be day 4 of the unit and the second day will be day five. There will be 2 more class periods after this lesson and then the test. This is certainly not ideal, however, time constraints and schedule changes came into play because it is the end of the quarter. My ultimate challenge then was to see if I could fit in some "beef" (no pun intended) to this lesson in the short time I had AND still have them prepared to take the assessment on day 8.

Instruction:

Day 1	
Teacher	Students
Provide a short introduction on muckrakers and Jacob Riis and Upton Sinclair	Listening
Pass out readings (determine in advance who will get which reading based on student needs, partners for day 1 and groups of 4 for day 2 - these should all be set up in advance of starting the lesson based on reading levels and student personalities for optimum performance in groups)	Receiving readings and glancing over them
Pass out steps/instruction pages and go over with students. Answer any student questions	Read instructions silently as teacher goes over them. Ask clarifying questions.
Circulate around the room to keep students on task and answer any questions they may have. Monitor to see that they are completing the tasks. Teacher may need to pull lower level readers into a larger group and work with them prior to having them work in partners. This varies from class to class. Adjust as needed.	Read and annotate. Answer questions. Then get with partners to go over answers and write a summary.

Day 2	
Teacher	Students
Set up the students into their new groups of 4 and be sure everyone has the instructions/steps sheet from yesterday.	Moving and listening and getting materials out.
Go over the steps for Day 2 and answer student questions.	Follow along as teacher goes over directions/steps and ask clarifying questions.
Circulating from group to group. Asking questions. Helping when needed. Redirecting. Clarifying. Encouraging responses. Etc.	Completing the steps for day 2. Teaching each group about their muckraker and his writing. Answering questions. Working together to find similarities and common problems, brainstorming solutions and making the chart.

Misconceptions students may have: Students may have trouble finding the similarities between the two pieces of writing. Sometimes they compartmentalize things so much they may only see that Jacob Riis is writing about children and Upton Sinclair is writing about a meat packing plant. They may not see how they overlap. I will have to interject and pose questions and provide information to prompt them along throughout the lesson. They also might not see the double sets of problems in the meat packing industry (work environment and poor product) and only get the "Oh gross" factor of the meat being made. They also might not understand some of the directions and what is expected of them.

Differentiation: The reading levels of the two pieces are different to accommodate for students' reading abilities. Lower readers and students with less ability to self-motivate were given the Upton Sinclair piece as it is high interest and a lower level read and students with higher reading levels were given the Jacob Riis piece. Students are also working alone, partners and then in groups of 4 to further differentiate the tasks. The groups will all turn out different levels of end product as well.

Student Engagement: This is a high interest topic with many opportunities for students to talk, compare, contrast, teach, debate, and problem solve. They are always much more likely to stay engaged when they are leading their work. The less I talk and just circulate and check in on them the better things flow. Students their age seem to process the best when they are discussing and puzzling things through.

Assessment/Closure: At the beginning of class on Day 3 they will be given 15 minutes to find the results/effects of the Muckrakers work by researching in the textbook to find the Progressive Era laws that were put into effect based on the public outrage caused by reading How the Other Half Lives and The Jungle. Many of these laws and pieces of legislation are on the test as is the work of Jacob Riis and Upton Sinclair.

1 **The Jungle (excerpted)**

2 Upton Sinclair (1906)

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4
5 There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there
6 would come back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy
7 and white - it would be dosed with **borax** and **glycerin**, and dumped into **hoppers**, and made
8 over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the
9 floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions
10 of **consumption** germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms and the water
11 from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was
12 too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man would run his hand over these piles
13 of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances,
14 and the packer would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and rats, bread,
15 and meat would go into the hoppers together... This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat
16 would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift
17 out a rat even when he saw one - there were things that went into the sausage in
18 comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There was no place for the men to
19 wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing
20 them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of
21 smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of
22 the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the
23 system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only
24 paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels.
25 Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale
26 water - and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers
27 with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast. Some of it they would make into
28 "smoked" sausage - but as the smoking took time, and was therefore expensive, they
29 would call upon their chemistry department, and preserve it with borax and color it with
30 gelatin to make it brown. All of their sausage came out of the same bowl, but when they
31 came to wrap it they would stamp some of it "special," and for this they would charge two
32 cents more a pound.

33
Vocabulary:

Borax - cleaning powder

Glycerin - sweet sticky liquid

Consumption - tuberculosis (a fatal lung disease)

Hoppers - containers

34 *How the Other Half Lives: Chapter 15: The Problem of Children* (excerpted)
35 Jacob Riis (1890)

36

37 The problem of the children become, in these swarms, to the last degree perplexing.
38 Their very number makes one stand aghast...these children with the training they receive
39 -or do not receive—with the instincts they inherit and absorb in their growing up, are to
40 be our future rulers, if our theory of government is worth anything. More than a working
41 majority of our voters now register from the tenements. I counted the other day the
42 little ones, up to ten years or so, in a Bayard Street tenement...I gave up my self-imposed
43 task in despair when I had counted one hundred and twenty-eight in forty families.
44 Sometimes I have doubted that anybody knows just how many there are about.

45 There was a big tenement in the Sixth Ward...that had a record of one hundred and
46 two arrests in four years among its four hundred and seventy-eight tenants, fifty-seven
47 of them for drunken and disorderly conduct. I do not know how many children there were
48 in it, but the inspector reported that he found only seven in the whole house who owned
49 that they went to school. The rest gathered all the instruction they received running for
50 beer for their elders...they slept in the streets at night...

51 ...that dismal alley with its bare brick walls, between which no sun ever rose or set,
52 was the world of those children. It filled their young lives. Probably not one of them had
53 ever been out of the sight of it. They were too dirty, too ragged, and too generally
54 **disreputable**...to come into line with the Fresh Air summer boarders....with appetite
55 ground to the **keenest** edge by a hunger that is never fed, the children of the poor grow
56 up in joyless homes to lives of wearisome toil that claims them at an age when the play of
57 their happier fellows has but just begun.

58 ...A little fellow who seemed clad in but a single rag was among the **flotsam and jetsam**
59 stranded at Police Headquarters one day last summer. No one knew where he came from
60 or where he belonged. The boy himself knew al little about it as anybody, and was the
61 least anxious to have light shed on the subject after he had spent a night in the **matron's**
62 nursery. The discovery that beds were provided for boys to sleep in there, and that he
63 could have "a whole egg" and three slices of bread for breakfast put him on the best of
64 terms with the world in general, and he decided that Headquarters was "a **bully** place."
65 ...he settled down to the serious business of giving an account of himself. The
66 examination went on after this fashion:

67 "Where do you go to church, my boy?"

68 "We don't have no clothes to go to church." And indeed his appearance, as he was, in the
69 door of any New York church would have caused a sensation.

70 "Well, where do you go to school then?"

71 "I don't go to school," with a snort of contempt.

72 "Where do you buy your bread?"
73 "We don't buy no bread; we buy beer," said the boy, and it was eventually the saloon that
74 led the police as a landmark to his "home." It was worthy of the boy. As he had said, his
75 only bed was a heap of dirty straw on the floor, his daily diet a crust in the morning,
76 nothing else.

77
78 ...In thirty-seven years the Children's Aid Society, that came into existence as an
79 **emphatic** protest against the tenement corruption of the young, has sheltered quite
80 three hundred thousand outcast, homeless, and orphaned children in its lodging-houses,
81 and has found homes in the West for seventy thousand that had none...the five millions
82 and a half thus spent were a wiser investment than to have let them grow up as thieves
83 and thugs. In the last fifteen years of this tireless battle for the safety of the State
84 the intervention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has been
85 **invoked** for 138,891 little ones; it has thrown its protection around more than twenty-
86 five thousand helpless children, and has convicted nearly sixteen thousand wretches of
87 child-beating and abuse.

88 ...nothing is now better understood than that the rescue of the children is the key to
89 the problem of city poverty...the young are naturally neither vicious nor hardened, simply
90 weak and undeveloped, except by the bad influences of the street, makes this duty all
91 the more urgent as well as hopeful. Helping hands are held out on every side...

92
93

Vocabulary:

Disreputable- not respectable, shabby

Keenest- sharpest

Flotsam and Jetsam - garbage found in the ocean

Matron's- head nurse's

"Bully" - a slang term meaning great or good. "Bully for you" means "Good for you"

Emphatic -forceful and definite

Invoked- to call upon a higher power for assistance

The Jungle Reading Questions:

1. What rodent caused problems for the meat packers? Why do you think the meat plant workers considered them to be such nuisances?
2. Reread lines 5-10. What are the two different meanings of the word **consumption** in this passage?
3. Based on the details and evidence given in this passage what were meat packers most concerned about? Provide two examples from the text to support your answer.
4. Come up with three improvements that could have been implemented meat packing plants that would result in healthier sausage.
5. Write a four (4) sentence summary of this passage:

How the Other Half Lives Reading Questions

1. On lines 37-48, Riis says children "are to be our future rulers, if our theory of government is worth anything." Find two pieces of evidence showing why this might be a problem if tenement children fill this role.
2. How many arrests were the tenement building in the Sixth Ward? Why are Sixth Ward residents in trouble with the law? Use evidence from the text with line numbers to explain how adult behavior causes problems for children.
3. What does Riis mean in line 54 when he writes, "come into line with the Fresh Air summer boarders"?
4. Explain why the little fellow written about in lines 58-66 did not want to go home? What was he given at the Matron's nursery that he had never had nor experienced before in his life?
5. Describe the mood of this excerpt at the beginning compared to the mood at the end. Reread lines 78-87. What does the author say is the key to solving the problems of city poverty?
6. Write a 4 sentence summary of this passage:

Muckrakers Primary Source Document Jigsaw Activity

Day 1 -

Step 1 - By yourself read through the document silently

Step 2 - Read your document a second time and use annotations (you may use any of the annotations you have been taught to use in Social Studies and English)

Step 3 - Answer the questions that are at the bottom of your document

Step 4 - Share your answers with your partner

Step 5 - Tomorrow in class you will be teaching the information in this document to 2 other students in a small group format. Working with your partner make a plan for which one of you will present which information.

Step 6 - Look up the information on your muckraker on pages 665, 668 and 669. If you want to learn more about them you are encouraged to do some research on them at home tonight.

Step 7 - Answer the Day 2 questions from your muckraker's point of view based on the information you just read from their book.

Day 2 -

Step 1 - Take turns letting each side briefly explain who their muckraker is and what Progressive Era problem he wrote about.

Step 2 - Take turns reading and then discussing answers to the following questions. Be sure to let each group member have the opportunity to share their answers and contribute to the discussion. Remember the technique of inviting someone into the discussion by asking them their opinion

Questions: Day 2

1. Why did so much "muck" exist in the tenements and in the meatpacking business?
2. Why had these conditions been ignored for so long?
3. Brainstorm one specific change that could be made in tenement living that could have a positive effect on the residents. Write it down and explain why it would be an improvement.
4. Brainstorm one specific change that could be made in the meatpacking industry that could have a positive effect on the workers. Write it down and explain why it would be an improvement.

Step 3 - Make a Chart

Use the large paper in the center of your group to make a chart of changes and possible effects for both the meat packing industry and tenement living in big cities. Come up with as many changes and effects as you can in the remaining class time. (Go for at least 3 for each problem) Put your names on the chart and turn it in before the bell rings.

If there is time, answer the following question:

1. Which work had the greater effect on its readers? Use details from the passages to explain your answer.

Day 3

Step 1 - *Get back into your small groups. Use your power point note taker and textbook to find laws and acts that were passed because of the work of muckrakers. Start with the effects of The Jungle and How the Other Half Lives and then branch out and find the work of*

- Ida Tarbell
- Lincoln Steffens
- Robert La Follette
- Marie Von Vorst
- Teddy Roosevelt.

	Name	Law/Legislation
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		